"NEW" VS "OLD" MEDIA
A CASE STUDY OF POLITICAL PROTEST GROUPS' MEDIA USE IN A NORWEGIAN MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract

This paper applies genre theory to examine political protesters' communication practices in a Norwegian municipality. The genres used in traditional, paper-based media are compared with the genres used in social media, in order to examine how these different media are being used to further the activist cause. The findings show that, while the same genres are being used in both media, their use and outcomes differ. These findings are discussed against the notion of the protest-based public sphere. Finally, suggestions for local voluntary organisations' media strategies are presented in the conclusion.

Keywords: Media use, social media, genre theory, public sphere

1. Introduction

Our media and communication habits are increasingly moving towards the digital domain and to social media. While political communication has been lagging behind, this area is also becoming increasingly digitised [Macintosh, McKay-Hubbard, & Shell, 2005; Tambouris, Liotas, & Tarabanis, 2007] and, as such, is being forced to change in order to adapt to the logic of two-way communication media [Jackson & Lilleker, 2009]. This move towards new media has been hastened by what is perceived as a lessening of civic engagement in traditional channels. Voter turnout is in decline [Gray & Caul, 2000], and there is less interest in political participation and debate [Østerud, Engelstad, & Selle, 2003]. Only 5% of Norwegian citizens are members of a political party [Van Biezen, Mair, & Poguntke, 2012]. Even so, what Delespinasse [2008] terms the power of the pen, the ability to persuade others through communicative actions, is "the key to creating a participatory democracy" [Casteel, 2010].

While there are many indicators that civic engagement is in decline, there are also indications that engagement is rather changing its form: "To the extent that political and civic identity and modes of action are changing, civic engagement may also be changing shape rather than decaying" [Bimber, 2003, p. 24]. Graham [2011] claims that we need to redefine our perceptions of which forms of communication should be seen as political, as he identifies much politically relevant content in what he calls "everyday talk" online. 39% of Americans have performed at least one political activity via social media [Rainie, Smith, Schlozman, Brady, &

Verba, 2012], and various collective action groups are thriving, using social media to gather support and disseminate information [Segerberg & Bennett, 2011]. Several scholars claim this shows that the public sphere, said to have disappeared in the age of mass media, has re-emerged online [Gimmler, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002]. That said, how does political communication function in online channels as compared to offline channels?

To answer this question, we look towards genre theory. Genre theory tells us that communicative acts which recur over time, with similar form and function, can be analysed and categorised into a set of communication genres [Yates & Orlikowski, 1992]. Genres used within an organisation or a given context can further be categorised into a repertoire of suitable genres for a given context [Orlikowski & Yates, 1994].

When moving from "old" to "new" media, the ways in which we communicate gradually change. Genres from the old medium will typically be copied as-is and used for some time in the new. After some time, new genres emerge, and old ones are adapted to fit the new medium. The maturity of a medium can, to some degree, be measured by examining the genres of the new and the old medium [Shepherd & Watters, 1998]. Maturity is, in this case, understood as the degree to which the actors involved in using the medium agree on the conventions and rules for the medium, as well as the emergence of new genres, or old genres that are adapted to the functionality of the new medium.

This paper identifies the genre systems [Yates & Orlikowski, 2002] used for political activist communication in new and old media, through a case study of an urban development project in a mid-sized Norwegian city. The individual genres are analysed according to how they fit with the objectives for political communication identified by Johannessen [2010]. The actors involved in the case have used traditional print media, social media and the internet in their communication, and this allows us to categorise the same message as different genres in different media.

In addition, these findings are discussed against the ideals of the public sphere. Is new media mature enough to cater for a public sphere for civil protest [Trenz & Eder, 2004], or are we still in transition between the "old" and "new"? Finally, recommendations are provided for the media strategies of local voluntary, protest-based organisations.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1. Local voluntary organisations and political protest

In Norway, part of the reason for the decline in traditional political participation is not a general decline in engagement, but a move towards issues-based engagement. Single issues, such as the case presented in this paper, can cause significant engagement [Lokaldemokratikommisjonen, 2006]. 58% of Norwegians are engaged in the voluntary, non-government sector, and 10% participate in organisations directly related to political issues [Sivesind, 2007]. However, all of the organisations are more or less politically engaged in their own areas. Voluntary work makes up about 7% of the total hours worked in Norway [Sivesind, 2007].

Definitions of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) vary and there is little agreement even on which organisations should be seen as NGOs [Fisher, 1997]. However, most agree on four basic issues: NGOs are not related to government, are not profit-based, are voluntary, and their activities are focused on the common good [Lang, 2013, p. 12]. Local and regional level

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activism, such as, for example, the case reported on in this paper, is seen as an important contributor to the public sphere, especially in organisations which focus on advocacy rather than civil disobedience [Lang, 2013].

In the digital realm, there are many examples of activist groups using the internet to further their case. Already in the early 1990s, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation movement in Mexico began experimenting with digital technologies and, in 1999, the internet was an essential part of the anti-globalisation protests against the World Trade Organization in Seattle [Kahn & Kellner, 2004]. More recently, social media was heavily used during the "Arab Spring" democratic uprisings in some Arab nations [Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013], and has been shown to have great potential as a collaboration tool among protesters [Segerberg and Bennett, 2011]. A demographic study found a significant difference between offline and online activists, suggesting that online engagement could attract new groups of people [Van Laer, 2010], and Dahlberg [2011] claims that digital media can facilitate stronger and more effective organisations. This is supported by a survey of advocacy groups in the United States, finding that most groups used social media to communicate with citizens, and that social media was an important enabler for reaching the groups' objectives [Obar, Zube, & Lampe, 2012].

A major criticism of online engagement is that it mainly leads to "slacktivism". Citizens "like" a page on Facebook but do not turn up at demonstrations or sign petitions, etc. [McCafferty, 2011]. However, a study of political protest in Chile found a strong correlation between social media use and political protest [Valenzuela, 2013]. Others point out that even small statements, such as changing your social media profile picture or liking a page, can contribute towards raising awareness of, and engagement in, an issue [Vie, 2014], thereby contributing to the social power of the supported organisations. Boström and Hallström [2010] present four different types of power stemming from NGOs: *symbolic power*, derived from the name and logo of the organisation; *cognitive power*, which is unique knowledge and information presented by the organisation; *social power,* which is the NGO's ability to network and create alliances and raise support, and *monitoring power*, where NGOs assess the promises made by government and business. These types of power allow NGOs to contribute to the public sphere in different ways.

2.2. The protest-based public sphere

The public sphere is defined as "that domain of our social life in which such a thing as public opinion can be formed" [Habermas, 1989, p. 231]. It is an autonomous "place" where citizens can debate government policy and act as an informal corrective when governments step out of bounds [Habermas, 1989], separated from the state and economic interests [Frazer, 1999; Habermas, 1989]. The public sphere can be understood as a mediating layer between government and citizen, where citizens discuss and agree on issues of public interest, as it is "the interaction between citizens, civil society, and the state, communicating through the public sphere, that ensures that the balance between stability and social change is maintained." [Castells, 2008 p.79].

Habermas' conceptualisation of the public sphere is not without criticism. The neutrality of the public sphere has been questioned from both a feminist [Fraser, 1990] and a class [Kluge & Negt, 1972] perspective. This criticism points out that a neutral and common space is not possible; instead we have several public spheres where Habermas' elitist public sphere is the dominant discourse and, in addition, we have several subaltern public spheres where the disenfranchised are active [Zhang, 2006]. Habermas' idea of rationality has also been criticised for not taking into account the roles that passions and collective identity play when debating

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political issues [Mouffe, 1999]. Dryzek [2005] builds on Mouffe's ideas and suggests that, for issues involving groups with significant differences in opinion, we should aim towards a deliberative public sphere with fora aimed at specific needs and issues, loosely connected to, but independent from, government, and transnational in nature.

A number of researchers have pointed to the internet as the medium for the modern day public sphere [Dahlgren, 2005; Gimmler, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002; Poster, 1997]. Studies of political participation indicate that internet use has led to an increase in the public's political interest [Gibson, Lusoli, & Ward, 2005], and it is claimed that the public sphere of today is moving to the digital realm. It is found in the media and in networks, and acts as the "cultural/informational repository of the ideas and projects that feed public debate." [Castells, 2008 p.79]. Using new media technologies can facilitate the creation of a "parallel poleis", a public sphere of dissenting voices [Lagos, Coopman, & Tomhave, 2014]. Previous studies of the relationship between traditional and social media found that the two were mutually informing and building on each other [Sayre, Bode, Shah, Wilcox, & Shah, 2010], and that social media can function as an agenda-setting tool [Meraz, 2009].

Trenz and Eder [2004] presents four ideal types of the public sphere. A public sphere can be discourse-based, based on political protest, on political campaigning, or simply on consensus. Another issue that can be measured, especially in cases of online activism, is the extent to which online activity is linked with the mainstream media and, through that, to the wider public sphere. For activist purposes, the protest-based public sphere is interesting to examine further. This type of public sphere can be unstable and is ever-changing, depending on the issues being fought for, but if protesters are successful in gaining the attention of decision-makers, the agenda of protest is moved up to the political realm [Trenz & Eder, 2004]. As an alternative to the mainstream, the protest-based public sphere, enacted through digital media, can provide a voice for alternative and marginalised groups [Dahlberg, 2011], creating subaltern public spheres [Zhang, 2006]. However, an effective protest-based public sphere should follow three conditions: (1) the intention of protest should be to address issues relevant to the democratic community, (2) protest should provide an alternative to, or new information for, the mainstream discourse, and (3) it should not promote discourses incompatible with the public sphere principle of inclusion, or "aim to force the alteration of a decision" [Smith, 2011].

2.3. Genres of communication

A genre can be defined as "a conventional category of discourse based in large-scale typification of rhetorical action" [Miller, 1984 p.163]. Genre theory has been applied to study communication patterns in a number of eParticipation studies [Johannessen, 2010; Päivärinta & Sæbø, 2008; Sæbø, 2011; Sæbø & Päivârinta, 2005]. Genres can act as tools for studying the role of communication in social processes [Yates & Orlikowski, 1992]. Genres develop over time, in the interaction between predefined rules for communication and the people who are communicating. Genres are useful when studying social media use in digital participation, as the introduction of new media over time often leads to new communication practices which genre theory allows us to map and analyse [Sæbø & Päivârinta, 2005]. Genre theory has also been used to define social media as a genre, pointing out that social media is different to other media because of the technology itself and the constantly shifting role of producer and recipient within the medium [Lomborg, 2011, 2014]. By studying communication genres instead of the technology used to communicate, we can discover how communication changes and evolves over time [Orlikowski & Yates, 1994], and genre theory can aid in uncovering power struggles,

as defining a genre's form and function is often part of a power struggle between different actors [Levina & Orlikowski, 2009].

Genres can be defined using the 5W1H method: by asking *where, why, when, who, what* and *how*, we can uncover the purpose, contents, placement in time, location, participants, structure and medium for communication [Yates & Orlikowski, 2002; Yoshioka, Herman, Yates, & Orlikowski, 2001].

Genres are further identified by having a common content (themes and topics of the conversation) and form (physical and linguistic features), as well as technological functionality in genres enacted through electronic media [Shepherd & Watters, 1998]. Some even claim that a technology such as social media can be defined as a genre in its own right [Lomborg, 2011]. While that might be a radical proposal, there are strong arguments for including functionality in the analysis of genres and their outcomes [Askehave & Nielsen, 2005].

It is possible to go beyond single genres, and look at a genre system. Genre systems are collections of genres that belong together [Yates & Orlikowski, 2002]. For example, the job application is part of a system where the job listing comes first, followed by the job application and some kind of feedback on the application. When examining an entire genre system, we can analyse communicative practices over time, and how new genres emerge and influence the ways we communicate [Orlikowski & Yates, 1994].

By analysing the genre system of different media, we can see if there are differences between how the genres are enacted, and identify the genres that are most used by participants in an eParticipation project [Orlikowski & Yates, 1994]. By applying genre theory in the study of new media forms, we gain a more comprehensive analysis than would have been obtained from only looking at the functionality of the technology behind the new medium [Orlikowski & Yates, 1994].

3. Research approach

The research was framed as a qualitative case study. This particular case was chosen for the following reason: the municipality has a history of citizen engagement, involving actors with an analytical approach to media strategies for political protest. The process has a long history; it has been almost 30 years since the first plans were set out for developing the area. This combination of historical richness and actors with a clear and stated strategy meant that the case offered rich data on several levels.

The initial objective for the project as a whole was to explore and understand how social media was being used by activist groups in a Norwegian municipality. As part of that objective, the research question for this paper is, "How does political communication function in online channels as compared to offline channels"?

The urban planning case was chosen because, as stated above, the process has a long history, dating back almost 30 years. This provides rich insights into the process, and especially into how the introduction of social media has changed the way the actors communicate. The number of people involved also made access to interview subjects easy. Furthermore, I have followed the case as a citizen over several years before engaging in it from a research perspective, which leads to a thorough understanding of the case context. There is a risk of bias, but I have attempted to minimise this risk through a discussion of the findings with colleagues. The

formation of local protest groups fighting against local or regional government and private initiative is a common pattern in Norwegian activism, as ongoing media coverage shows.

The data used in this case was collected between February and November 2011.

For the findings reported in this paper, the main source of data consists of postings from five Facebook groups related to the case, and letters to the editor of a local newspaper, which were published in 2010 and 2011. These are the basis for the genre analysis.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were carried out with representatives related to the case: four members of the city council; two officials from the city administration responsible for developing the plans; the private investor's representative; one representative of the local media (plus informal meetings and email correspondence with two others); three representatives from the three main activist groups, and one representative from the regional government heritage department. The interviews are mainly used for the discussion in Section 6, and coded against the criteria for a protest-based public sphere, as presented in Section 2.

In addition, I attended one workshop meeting and two city council meetings, where field notes were made and written up. All documents relevant to the case between 2007 and 2011 that were made available by the city council were collected and analysed. This includes minutes from council meetings, consultancy reports, architectural plans, formal hearing documents and the results of two surveys carried out in relation to the development project. I have also studied the news coverage of the case to supplement the respondents' narrative of the timeline. The two last paragraphs of the case description are based on the most recent news coverage and a telephone interview with the reporter responsible for the case.

The data was analysed using genre theory and the 5W1H framework [Yates & Orlikowski, 2002, see Section 2.3 for details] to identify the genre systems of old and new media. Old media is represented by the print edition of the local newspaper, while new media is represented by five Facebook groups related to the case. The analysis was inspired by a genre analysis of a municipal online discussion board [Päivärinta & Sæbø, 2008].

5W1H can be seen as a somewhat generic approach to coding. Thus, I show here how the framework was applied in this particular case, using the genre "call to action" as example. The original message from Facebook reads (translated from Norwegian): "VERY IMPORTANT that as many people as possible show up at City Hall Thursday at 4 to promote our fight against the project". The 5W1H analysis for this message is as follows.

Why refers to the socially accepted purpose of the message. The overall accepted purpose from the activist perspective, reported in the interviews, is to fight the development in any way possible. In this particular message, the purpose is stated explicitly: it is a call for people to act, "to promote our fight against the project". This was the first indicator to how to name the genre.

When refers to the time when communication takes place. In political protest, time may or may not be of importance, but often it is important to respond rapidly to new developments in the case. One of the interviewed activists was clear that one of the most important things for them was to act fast when new plans were presented and introduce negative words, such as "dark towers", for the architectural plans presented. In this case, time is essential as it is a call to act on a specific date and time: "show up…Thursday at 4*"*.

Who identifies the sender and receiver of the message. In the case, the sender is most often the local media, activist groups and sympathisers and sometimes the developer. The receivers are the same, as well as the general public, whom everyone wants to have on their side. In this message, the sender and receiver belong to the same group, the activists. In addition, sympathisers who are following the group could be seen as receivers.

What is the overall content of the genre, and is connected with the genre purpose and what the text is trying to convey. In this selected message the content and purpose clearly overlap: "Show up [do something] at City Hall Thursday at 4 [at a specific time and place] to promote our fight [purpose for acting]".

Finally, *How* describes the technical aspects and linguistic features (form) of the message. In this case this would include such things as newspapers or Facebook as delivery medium, images, video, attached links and other multimedia content. Furthermore, I look for the message structure, such as word count and how the message is structured (short text, no headings, heading and sub-sections, with or without images, etc.). Linguistic elements include elements such as the use of exclamation marks (suggests agitation or urgency) and other punctuation. The way words are connected into sentences (grammar) and the pattern of the message (a statement followed by a set of arguments supporting the statement, a statement using negative words or expletives about another person). In this particular message, the word count is low (23 words), suggesting a short descriptive or prescriptive message. There are no headings or other structural elements, but capital letters and exclamation marks suggest urgency. The pattern is, as described earlier, a call to do something at a specific time and place, for a stated purpose. All in all, the 5W1H framework suggests this genre is a call to do something, which is why it was named "call to action".

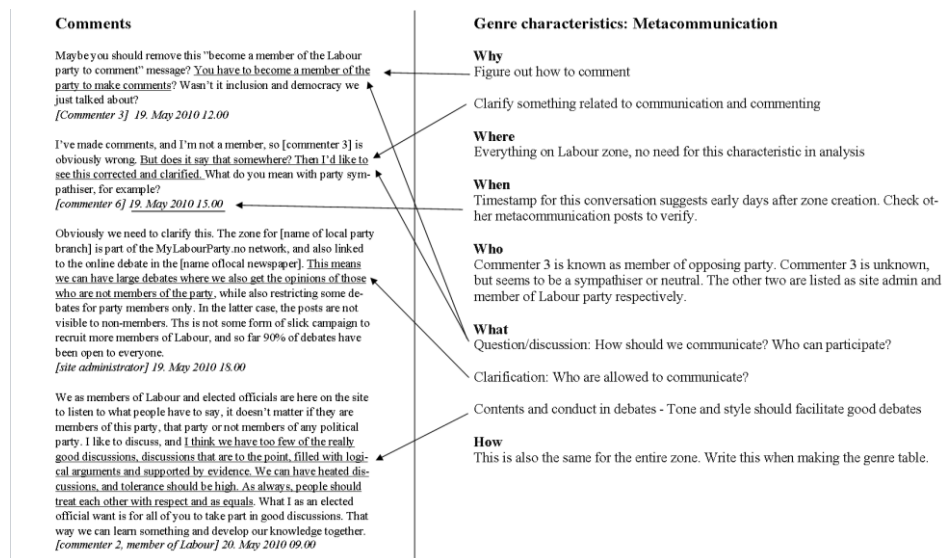Figure 1 shows another example of how the genres were coded.

Figure 1 : Example of genre coding

4. Case description

The case regards a planned development of a five-acre cove close to the city centre of a mid-sized Norwegian city (40,000 inhabitants). Over the past 30 years, there have been a number of plans for development of the cove, as shown in Figure 2. The area is very attractive for development, as it is by the sea and it is also the last open area close to the city centre in a city where the topography makes development difficult.
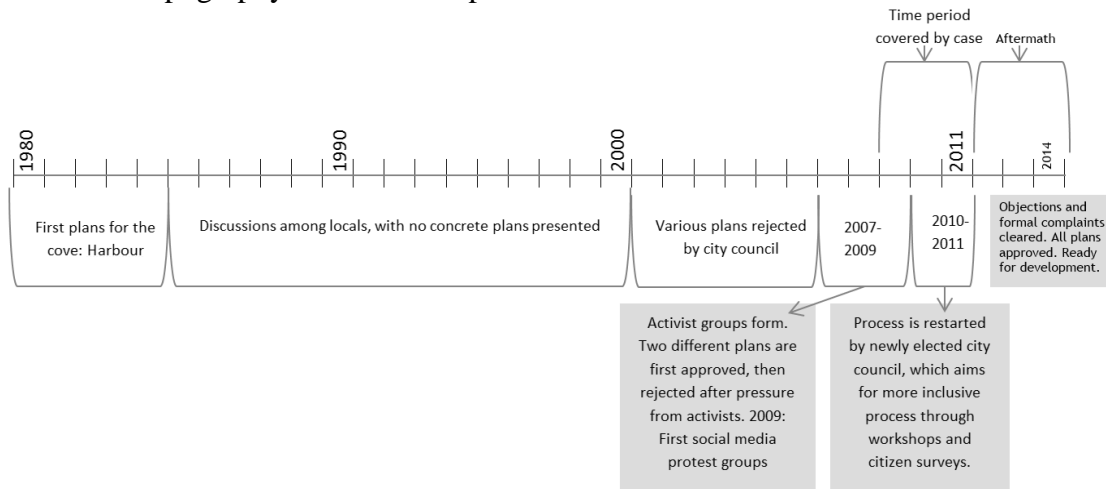

Figure 2: Case timeline

There is strong agreement in the population that something should be done about the cove. No one is pleased with the current situation. Various plans were presented and rejected between 1980 and 2008. The plans from 2007 led to the first organised local opposition. The local residents association started campaigning against the development by talking directly to politicians, writing to the local newspaper, and setting up stands and organising protest concerts. Their main argument was that this was the last area close to the city centre that could be developed into a green recreational park. They also organised a campaign to have politicians sympathetic to their cause voted in to the city council in the 2007 municipal election, and succeeded so well that the plans were rejected by the new city council in 2008.

 One year later, new plans were presented. Once again the residents association protested, and this time new activist groups were formed and joined the opposition. The new groups consisted of creative professionals, local historians and heritage people. Once again they were able to stop the proposed plans.

In 2010, the municipality restarted the process, and decided to come up with a new area development plan. After being criticised for not listening to the citizens when the past plans were laid out, the municipality decided to organise this as a more inclusive process.

In 2011, they arranged three workshops prior to the plans being developed by the city administrators. In total, 30 different groups and organisations were invited to these workshops. Workshop participants had four different alternatives with which to work: the entire area as a recreational park, or with 25%, 50% or 75% development.

In addition to the workshops, an online survey was distributed to the general public and presented at the final workshop. 55.7% of the respondents (N=688) reported they wanted at least half the area for a recreational park. The local newspaper distributed another survey two

months later, with similar results. Both surveys were open to interpretation, which lead developers and activists to argue a great deal about which was the true public opinion in the matter.

Several respondents, both activists and government officials, have called this a sham process, and claimed that politicians had no intention to do anything other than soothe the opposition. When faced with these charges in the interviews, politicians have denied them, claiming they created the workshops and surveys in an honest attempt to be more inclusive.

The plans for development were finally approved by the council over two meetings in March and August 2011, with 75% of the cove being set aside for development and the remainder as parkland. Both meetings had a large audience consisting mainly of activists. There were few, if any, people under the age of 35 present, in spite of activist claims that the younger generations were very engaged in the case and were major supporters of a recreational park. In both meetings, activists created a lot of disturbance, causing the mayor to threaten to close off the meeting to the public. After the August meeting, activists were furious, claiming the politicians had failed to listen to the public.

In the autumn of 2011 there was another municipal election. Once again the activists created a pamphlet showing how people could vote if they wanted "park-friendly" politicians in the new city council. The lists were distributed online and also spread through physical means and word of mouth. Although not a complete success (the activists were not able to overturn the council's previous decision), the activists were once again able to influence who was elected to the city council. They also got the directorate for public heritage involved. The directorate denied the developer's plans for high rise buildings in 2012.

In October 2013, renewed plans were presented, which show three buildings with a rather large area set aside for the public. These plans were accepted with a significant majority in the city council.

Even though it seems as if the activists have lost their fight, there is no doubt that the citizen-initiated participation has had considerable influence in this case. The activists have managed to influence the composition of two city councils, have made the city council swing against development several times and, through this, they have delayed development for almost six years, and forced the city to make concessions such as the workshops and survey, as well as the creation of several reports on noise, pollution and other issues. While they were not satisfied with the outcome, Figure 3 clearly shows they were able to change the plans in favour of their own vision.
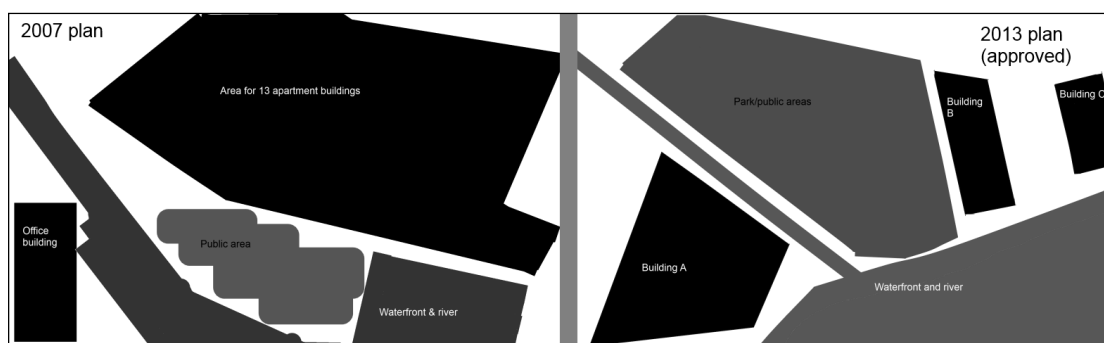

Figure 3: 2007 plan and the approved 2013 plan. Black areas indicate buildings.

5.   Findings

5.1.   Objectives for political communication in social media

Earlier research conducted by the author has shown that there are three objectives as to why politicians choose to communicate via digital media. These are dialogue with citizens, contributions from citizens, and involvement in party activities (anonymised reference). Effective political communication should thus address these. These objectives can be interpreted as genres in their own right. Table 1 shows the three objectives as genres. In summary, politicians report they want to use digital media to engage citizens in *dialogue* about political issues in order to involve and engage people in political debate. They want citizens to *contribute* knowledge about issues as well as their concerns about coming political challenges. One example is the former Norwegian Minister of Health who, in the process of creating a health reform, asked citizens to contribute their stories about the health care system. Finally, politicians report they want citizens to become more *involved* in the political parties' activities. This includes using digital channels to get people to volunteer to go door to door during the election campaign, being at events handing out materials, etc.

The genres identified in the discussion spaces we are observing can be analysed as to which of these "genre objectives" they support, and this knowledge can be applied by site administrators and politicians in such a way as to facilitate the use of genres which are most likely to lead to the desired objective.

	Dialogue	Contribution	Involvement
Why	Involve citizens in public debate	Knowledge about citizen concerns	Raise funds Get people to volunteer
When	Continuous	Election time	Election time
What	Conversation between citizens and politicians/citizens and citizens	Q&A. Voter stories	Competitions, membership forms, information
Who	Politicians, party members, citizens	Politicians, party members, voters	Voters, sympathisers
Where	Social networking service, website	Social networking service, website	Social networking service, website
How	Encourage dialogue Open and personal language Citizen-generated content	Encourage contributions and questions from voters	Competitions, theme sites, cross-publication

Table 1: Political objectives as genres

5.2.   Genre system: Traditional media

The first genre analysis examines the "letters to the editor" section of the local newspaper, which is where the majority of print-based discussion has taken place. While letters to the editor could be said to be a genre in itself, there are some significant differences in style and form. As could be expected from a mature medium, there are a limited number of genres to be found. Except for the "poem" genre, the main difference between the genres in the letters to the editor section lies in the level of formality and how the arguments are presented.

Some letters retain a formal tone and are based on facts, while others are more personal, some bordering on libellous. In the beginning there were several voices represented, but as the case progressed, the activists who were against development produced the vast majority of letters. Letters tend to become more aggressive over time, with a somewhat increased focus on individuals and less on formal, fact-based debate. As it is mainly those opposing development

who write to the paper, there is little direct debate. However, a number of the writers address politicians by name, citing things the politician(s) said in council meetings or other places. All in all, the majority of letters are at least somewhat fact-based and formal. The genre system of the editorial column functions well for disseminating ideas, and somewhat well for debate; at least this was the case before those in favour of development stopped participating. The developer's representative stated in the interview that they felt they had little to gain by participating in a public debate, and focused their efforts on direct communication with politicians instead:

> As developer, people see you as the big bad wolf no matter what...and the media tends to focus on the negative and on the big letters. Not the core of the issue, but anything that can be seen as negative for the community. (interview, developer's representative)

The genres are presented in Table 2. The first two rows describe the purpose and actors of the genre repertoire (letters to the editor), while the rest of the Table is a 5W1H analysis of the individual genres identified within the genre system.

System: why	Promote and conduct debate about local issues	
System: whose	Owned and edited by the local newspaper Open to everyone, but editors decide who gets printed	
Genre	**Opinion, formal**	**Opinion, informal**
Where	Newspaper	Newspaper
Why	Convince others through presenting facts	Convince others through appeals to emotions
When	Continuously, more when case is processed in city council or during election time	Continuously, more when case is processed in city council or during election time
Who	Activist to citizen/politicians Developer to citizen/politicians	Activist to citizen/politicians
What	Presents a view, followed by supporting facts and arguments	Presents a view, supported by emotional statements or unsupported views
How	Letters are sent to the editor and published	Letters are sent to the editor and published
Relation to Table 1	Dialogue, contribution	Dialogue, contribution
Genre	**Poem**	**Personal attacks**
Where	Newspaper	Newspaper
Why	Gain attention through an unusual genre	Vent own feelings, discredit the one being attacked
When	Infrequently, no set pattern	Continuously, more when case is processed in city council or during election time, or when newspaper editorial have written positively about development
Who	Activist/citizen to citizens	Activist to politicians/developer/news editor
What	Short rhymes, aimed at touching people's emotions	Points to previous letter or quote and argues against it. Some simply claim the person being attacked is less gifted because s/he means what s/he means
How	Letters are sent to the editor and published	Letters are sent to the editor and published
Relation to Table 1	None	None

Table 2: Genre system in newspaper editorial section

5.3.   Genre system: Social media

All the Facebook groups we found were run by activists, and most of the participants in the groups were either activists or citizens supporting the activists' opposition to development. There were also a significant number of passive members who did not contribute to the discussions on the wall, some of whom were representatives of the city council or the media who joined in order to follow what the activists were saying and planning. There are some noteworthy differences between the two genre systems. In social media we see many of the same genres, but also some new ones where functionality of the medium plays an important role. The links genre makes use of the networked nature of the internet to provide fast access to information stored elsewhere, and link targets often contain multimedia content. Table 3 illustrates this further.

Multimedia also helps to enrich some of the other genres. The formal and informal opinion genres are present in both the "old" and "new" media, but are enacted somewhat differently in new media. In the Facebook groups we see a lot of images and also some videos made by the activists to show how the planned development will impact on the surroundings. These provide valuable extra information that can be difficult to present in a printed medium with limited space. The developer's representative points out that these multimedia capabilities could be used more in urban planning:

> I'm an old man, but I've started to use Facebook and Twitter a bit. Not enough but…
> And we've discussed for example that we could use YouTube to post videos of our projects. We are an innovative company using new architectural methods, so we could use these media to sort of show off what we do and how things are going to look in the end. And of course these things should be used more in development projects to raise engagement and awareness about projects through social media. (interview, developer's representative)

On the other hand, postings on Facebook tend to be shorter, there is less fact-based discussion and postings seem to be more improvised, which provides less information than the longer and more thought-out letters to the editor. One of the city council members also claims that, while social media can raise awareness for a short period of time, traditional media is more important for discourse formation over a longer perspective:

> Except for Obama and some others, I don't think social media works well over time…
> In this particular case too, I think newspaper articles and letters to the editor have a much larger impact over time. This might change some day, but I don't really believe it will. (interview, city council member 3)

Another difference is the spontaneous "greetings/cheers" genre, where people will congratulate each other, or citizens will write a short post to show their support for the activists' case. This kind of informal communication is not likely to be printed, as it does not contribute to the public debate, but nonetheless acts as important feedback and perhaps acts as moral support for the activists. In the next section, I discuss the differences of these genre systems in the context of the protest-based public sphere.

System: why	Activist groups fighting against the planned development	
System: whose	Owned by activist groups or individuals, open to everyone but mostly participants are opposed to development	
Genre	Opinion, formal	Opinion, informal
Where	Facebook group wall	Facebook group wall
Why	Convince others through presenting facts	Present short opinion on something
When	Ongoing	Ongoing
Who	Activist to activist/citizen	Activist to activist/citizen
What	Presents a view, followed by supporting facts and arguments. Often with links, pictures, video	Presents a view, supported by emotional statements or unsupported views. Sometimes with links, pictures, video
How	Group members post messages on wall	Group members post messages on wall
Relation to Table 1	Dialogue, contribution	Contribution
Genre	Call to action	Personal attacks
Where	Facebook group wall	Facebook group wall
Why	Get people to act on something	Discredit opponents
When	Before city council meetings or other events where there is a need to do something	Ongoing
Who	Activist to activist	Activist to developer, politicians
What	Invites people to participate in demonstrations, contact politicians or cast their vote in a certain way	Often unprovoked short comments claiming a named person or group are in the wrong
How	Group members post messages on wall	Group members post messages on wall
Relation to Table 1	Involvement	None
Genre	Links	Greetings/cheers
Where	Facebook group wall	Facebook group wall
Why	Inform others about content posted elsewhere	Congratulate each other after victories, raise morale
When	Ongoing	When the city council vote in favour of activists
Who	Activist to activist/citizen	Activist/citizen to activists
What	Links to other online spaces, often multimedia content	Positive comments about a recent event, or about the activists' work
How	Group members post messages on wall, often with a short comment	Group members post messages on wall
Relation to Table 1	Dialogue, contribution	None (acts as support and moral boost)

Table 3: Genre repertoire in social media

6. Discussion: Protest-based public spheres?

In this section, the findings from the genre analysis are used to examine how the communication in traditional and social media fits with the concept of a protest-based public sphere as outlined in Sections 2.1 and 2.2. While there are differences between the two genre systems, they each contribute to the public sphere in their own way. The genre system of traditional media is perhaps better suited to support a traditional Habermasian public sphere, where people of different opinions come together to discuss and debate. Letters printed in the newspaper are, in general, more argumentative than posts in social media, and reach a larger audience. They

present a statement, and follow up with arguments as to why their statement is correct. The editorial selection made by newspapers means that letters without at least some form of logical argument are rejected, so this is only logical.

The genres in social media are less in line with Habermas' traditional public sphere ideals, but works well in supporting a political protest public sphere. Activists and their supporters have a place to meet, where they can discuss topics, support each other, share information and maybe recruit new members. There is also the added value that some journalists do use social media in their work, to discover new issues and find new sources. Sometimes social media gives them ideas for stories they would otherwise not have written. An informal email survey sent to the journalists in the local newspaper confirms that this happens. In this particular case, there is also a difference in how social media and traditional media are being used, where the activist groups are more active online, and traditional media acting more as a discussion space for discourse formation:

> Local [traditional] media have played a very important part in keeping the discussions alive, and for keeping the pressure up on the council to reach a decision… We've used the municipal Facebook page to spread some information, but have not been very active otherwise, as the resources are scarce. But the activists have been very active on Facebook, creating lots of protest groups, etc. (interview, municipality head architect)

One of the city council members interviewed also points out that social media has been somewhat important, but only as one of several channels for communication, and mostly for activist purposes:

> We've had everything from youth creating Facebook groups protesting against high rise buildings, fighting for the area to become a park and lots of others. But this has been one of many forms of protest, with demonstrations, letters to the newspapers, different events and more, so there's been a wide range of activities…I'm sure Facebook has led to at least some more people joining the activists. (interview, city council member 1).

Also, the network effects of social media are potentially a lot stronger. Networking and mobilising was seen as very important by the activist group that was most active in social media:

> Facebook has definitely been important for mobilising. We post a message saying "show up for this demo or that event"...And we put everything online both on Facebook and our web site. The suggestions for how people should vote for example. (interview, activist 1)

In this regard, social media has, in this case, first of all provided the activist groups with that which Boström and Hallström [2010] term "social power", the ability to network and raise support. There is also some evidence of cognitive power through the links genre, where the pulling in of external information provides knowledge about the process which is not easily available elsewhere.

However, social media still has limitations in terms of reaching every citizen group. As the regional heritage officer says, there are still important citizens who do not even own a computer:

> We discuss social media at our meetings… but us administrators, we still write letters on paper, and send them in the post… There are, especially for us dealing with heritage

buildings and other artefacts, a lot of contact with people who are not online. They write to us using pen and paper, and we have to respond accordingly. (interview, regional heritage office administrative officer)

Even so, the three conditions for a protest-based public sphere [Smith, 2011] were met at least partially. The issue being raised was indeed relevant to the community, as the surveys showed that a majority of the city's population were concerned about how the cove was being developed. The protesters did provide alternative information to the mainstream discourse, especially in the early stages, where the developer and city administration's view was the only one present. The third condition, not to promote discourses incompatible with the principle of inclusion, was however not met in the genres used in social media. A few voices tried arguing for development in the Facebook groups of the protesters, but these were met with hostility through the personal attacks genre and quickly silenced. While some did try the same tactic in print media, this was less successful as the editors were interested in hearing from all sides. This latter point shows the value of thinking about a set of subaltern public spheres [Fraser, 1990; Zhang, 2006), as the differences between the two opposing sides were simply too large to be resolved within one common public sphere.

In terms of agenda-setting, this case confirms the findings of Meraz [2009] and, to a lesser extent, also Sayre et al. [2010]. Especially in the early stages of the protests, the sheer amount of support that some Facebook groups received were enough to put the development case on the agenda of both local media and politicians. Social media provided a voice to those who were not able to write letters to the editor, or talk to politicians. The mobilisation taking place in part through Facebook meant that the case was raised to the mainstream public sphere and there was an ongoing interplay between traditional and social media as a result of this. This also confirms the findings of Dryzek [2005]. The interplay between traditional and social media seen in this case supports Dryzek's idea [2005] that we should strive for a diversified set of public spheres where loose connections with government ensures they are heard; in this case, the loose connections would be formed by politicians following the various Facebook groups.

This study also confirms the findings which show that online and social media use can attract new groups of people [Van Laer, 2010] and that social media enables new communication forms between protest groups and citizens [Obar et al., 2012; Valenzuela, 2013]. The five examined Facebook groups collected several thousand followers, and the interview respondents all underlined the importance of using social media as a tool for reaching out to potential sympathisers and for organising protests. However, even though they managed to gather strong online support, the thousands of Facebook followers were reduced to sometimes tens, sometimes a hundred, physical protesters, indicating that McCafferty's [2011] "slacktivism" hypothesis is not without merit. However, the numbers in the case presented here were still sufficient for the protesters to achieve several of their goals. Thus, while a lot of followers could be termed slacktivists, they still contribute with small statements [Vie, 2014], such as contributing to the protest groups' claim that "the whole city is behind us".

7. Conclusion and recommendations

This paper has examined the genre systems of the letters to the editor column in traditional print media and in social media, with the purpose of uncovering differences and similarities between the two systems, and to measure if social media is beginning to produce media-specific genres for eParticipation, and what this means for the public sphere.

All in all, the two genre systems examined in this case complement each other well. The traditional media reaches a broader audience and is more focused on traditional debate, and is read by most of the respondents in the interviews. According to interview respondents from political parties and the developer, the genre system found in social media has a more narrow audience, mainly reaching activists and sympathisers. Yet it presents a wider range of genres, arguments supported by links to other sites, multimedia content and the ability to mobilise a large audience. These differences suggest that social media genres, aided by the functionality of digital platforms, are increasingly moving towards maturity, with their own rules and regulations.

As for the public sphere, the findings in the case support the idea of subaltern public spheres, where several public spheres stand in contrast to the dominant discourse led by traditional elites. The various social media spaces in use can be seen as contradictory to the elite discourse led by the people in power, thereby forming an alternative, or subaltern, public sphere giving room for opposing voices.

For practitioners, a few recommendations may be drawn from the findings presented in this paper. First, a multiple channel strategy should be implemented by local protest groups. The genre analysis shows that the media channels have some differences, and the interviewed activists all strongly emphasise this need to use all available channels to further their goals. Second, it is important to take advantage of the strength of the individual medium. Part of the success of the activists came from them being able to use the different media to strengthen their message. Through the newspaper they presented rational arguments to convince the general public; in social media the rhetoric was stronger, aimed at keeping spirits high and getting people to participate in demonstrations. The multimedia and hyperlinking functionality of social media also played a part.

There are some limitations to the findings in this paper. As they are based on one single case, it is not possible to generalise the findings outside of the case context. Other cases in different contexts would perhaps provide very different results. Future research efforts could include examining how the different genres should be enacted to support the objectives in Table 1, and through them the public sphere. Also, more research is needed into how the added functionality of new media can contribute to eParticipation, if certain media are better suited than others for a given genre, and what combination of genres and media would be likely to provide good results for the concrete objectives of various activist campaigns.

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